# COMUS.

A

# MASQUE.

As it is Acted at the

THEATRES-ROYAL

IN

DRURY-LANE

AND

COVENT-GARDEN.

---

Altered from MILTON.

---

——Quid vocis modulatem inane juvabit
Verborum ſenſuſque vacans numerique loquacis?
MILTON. ad Patrem.

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M DCC LXXVII.

# PROLOGUE.

OUR ſtedfaſt bard, to his own genius true,
Still bad his muſe "fit audience find, though few."
Scorning the judgment of a triflíng age,
To choicer ſpirits he bequeath'd his page.
He too was ſcorn'd; and, to Britannia's ſhame,
She ſcarce for half an age knew Milton's name.
But now, his fame by ev'ry trumpet blown,
We on his deathleſs trophies raiſe our own.
Nor art nor nature did his genius bound,
Heav'n, hell, earth, chaos, he ſurvey'd around.
All things his eye, through wit's bright empire thrown,
Beheld; and made what it beheld his own.
Such Milton was: 'Tis ours to bring him forth,
And yours to vindicate neglected worth.
Such heav'n-taught numbers ſhould be more than read,
More wide the manna through the nation ſpread.
Like ſome bleſs'd ſpirit, he to-night deſcends;
Mankind he viſits, and their ſteps befriends;
Through mazy error's dark perplexing wood,
Points out the path of true and real good.
Warns erring youth, and guards the ſpotleſs maid
From ſpell of magic vice, by reaſon's aid.
Attend the ſtrains; and, ſhould ſome meaner phraſe
Hang on the ſtyle, and clog the nobler lays,
Excuſe what we with trembling hand ſupply,
To give his beauties to the public eye;
His the pure eſſence, ours the groſſer mean,
Through which his ſpirit is in action ſeen.
Obſerve the force, obſerve the flame divine,
That glows, breathes, acts, in each harmonious line.
Great objects only ſtrike the gen'rous heart;
Praiſe the ſublime, o'erlook the mortal part;
Be there your judgment, here your candour ſhewn;
Small is our portion——and we wiſh 'twere none.

# EPILOGUE.

*SOME critic, or I am deceiv'd, will aſk,*
*"What means this wild, this allegoric maſque?*
*"Beyond all bounds of truth this author ſhoots;*
*"Can wands or cups transform men into brutes?*
*"'Tis idle ſtuff!"——And yet I'll prove it true:*
*Attend; for ſure I mean it not of you.*
*The mealy fop, that taſtes my cup, may try*
*How quick the change from beau to butterfly;*
*But o'er the Inſect ſhould the Brute prevail,*
*He grins a monkey with a length of tail.*
*One ſtroke of this, as ſure as Cupid's arrow,*
*Turns the warm youth into a wanton ſparrow.*
*Nay, the cold prude becomes a ſlave to love,*
*Feels a new warmth, and coos a billing dove.*
*The ſly coquet, whoſe artful tears beguile*
*Unwary hearts, weeps a falſe crocodile.*
*Dull poring pedants, ſhock'd at truth's keen light,*
*Turn moles, and plunge again in friendly night;*
*Miſers grow vultures, of rapacious mind,*
*Or more than vultures, they devour their kind;*
*Flatt'rers cameleons, creeping on the ground,*
*With ev'ry changing colour changing round.*
*The party-fool, beneath his heavy load,*
*Drudges a driven aſs thro' dirty road.*
*While guzzling ſots, their ſpouſes ſay, are hogs;*
*And ſnarling criticks, authors ſwear, are dogs.*
*But to be grave, I hope we've prov'd, at leaſt,*
All vice is folly, and makes man a beaſt.

# Dramatis Perſonæ.

## M E N.

Comus.
Firſt Spirit.
Elder Brother.
Younger Brother.
Bacchanals.
Second Spirit.

## W O M E N.

Lady.
Euphroſyne.
Bacchants.
Sabrina, and Paſtoral Nymph.

Bacchanals, Naiads, Spirits, &c.

SCENE, a Wood near Ludlow Caſtle.

# COMUS.

☞ As this moſt excellent Performance is now mutilated, and reduced to an Afterpiece, we have thought proper to inform our Readers what Lines are omitted, by placing an inverted Comma [ ' ] before each.

## ACT I.

*The Firſt* SCENE *diſcovers a wild Wood.*

*' The firſt Attendant Spirit enters.*

' BEFORE the ſtarry threſhold of Jove's court
' My manſion is, where thoſe immortal ſhapes
' Of bright aërial ſpirits live inſpher'd
' In regions mild of calm and ſerene air,
' Above the ſmoke and ſtir of this dim ſpot,
' Which men call earth, and with low-thoughted
' care
' Confin'd and peſter'd in this pinfold here,
' Strive to keep up a frail and fev'riſh being,
' Unmindful of the crown that virtue gives,
' After this mortal change, to her true ſervants,
' Amongſt th' enthroned gods on ſainted ſeats.
' Yet ſome there are, that by due ſteps aſpire
' To lay their juſt hands on that golden key
' That opes the palace of eternity:
' To ſuch my errand is; and but for ſuch,
' I would not ſoil theſe pure ambroſial weeds
' With the rank vapours of this ſin-worn mould.
' But whence yon ſlanting ſtream of purer light,
' Which ſtreaks the midnight gloom, and hither
' darts

‘ Its beamy point? Some meſſenger from Jove,
‘ Commiſſion'd to direct or ſhare my charge;
‘ And, if I ken him right, a ſpirit pure
‘ As treads the ſpangled pavement of the ſky,
‘ The gentle Philadel: but ſwift as thought
‘ He comes———
‘ *The ſecond Attendant Spirit deſcends.*
‘ Declare, on what ſtrange errand bent,
‘ Thou viſiteſt this clime, to me aſſign'd,
‘ So far remote from thy appointed ſphere?
‘ *Sec. Spirit.* On no appointed taſk thou ſeeſt
‘ me now:
‘ But as returning from Elyſian bow'rs
‘ (Whither from mortal coil a ſoul I wafted)
‘ Along this boundleſs ſea of waving air
‘ I ſteer'd my flight, betwixt the gloomy ſhade
‘ Of theſe thick boughs thy radiant form I ſpy'd
‘ Gliding, as ſtreams the moon thro' duſky clouds;
‘ Inſtant I ſtoop'd my wing, and downward ſped
‘ To learn thy errand, and with thine to join
‘ My kindred aid, from mortals ne'er with-held,
‘ When virtue on the brink of peril ſtands.
‘ *Firſt Spirit.* Then mark th' occaſion that de-
mands it here.
‘ Neptune, I need not tell, beſides the ſway
‘ Of ev'ry ſalt flood and each ebbing ſtream,
‘ Took in by lot 'twixt high and nether Jove
‘ Imperial rule of all the ſea-girt iſles,
‘ That, like the rich and various gems, inlay
‘ The unadorned boſom of the deep,
‘ Which he, to grace his tributary gods,
‘ By courſe commits to ſeveral governments,
‘ And gives them leave to wear their ſaphire crowns,
‘ And wield their little tridents: but this iſle,
‘ The greateſt and the beſt of all the main,
‘ He quarters to his blue-hair'd deities;
‘ And all this tract that fronts the falling ſun
‘ A noble peer of mickle truſt and power
‘ Has in his charge, with temper'd awe to guide
‘ An old and haughty nation, proud in arms.
‘ *Sec. Spirit.* Does any danger threat his legal ſway,
‘ From bold ſedition, or cloſe ambuſh'd treaſon?
‘ *Firſt Spirit.* No danger thence. But to his
‘ lofty ſeat,
‘ Which borders on the verge of this wild vale,
‘ His blooming offspring, nurs'd in princely lore,
‘ Are coming to attend their father's ſtate,
‘ And new-entruſted ſceptre; and their way
‘ Lies through the perplex'd paths of this drear
‘ wood,

'The nodding horror of whoſe ſhady brows
'Threats the forlorn and wand'ring paſſenger;
'And here their tender age might ſuffer peril,
'But that by quick command from ſovereign Jove
'I was diſpatch'd for their defence and guard.
'*Sec. Spirit.* What peril can their innocence ailEnil
'Within theſe lonely and unpeopl'd ſhades?
'*Firſt Spirit.* Attend my words. No place but
'harbours danger;
'In ev'ry region virtue finds a foe.
'Bacchus, that firſt from out the purple grape
'Cruſh'd the ſweet poiſon of miſuſed wine,
'After the Tuſcan mariners transform'd,
'Coaſting the Tyrrhene ſhore as the winds lifted,
'On Circe's iſland fell: (who knows not Circe,
'The daughter of the ſun, whoſe charmed cup
'Whoever taſted, loſt his upright ſhape,
'And downward fell into a grov'ling ſwine?)
'This nymph, that gaz'd upon his cluſt'ring locks,
'With ivy-berries wreath'd, and his blithe youth,
'Had by him, ere he parted thence, a ſon;
'Much like his father, but his mother more,
'Whom therefore ſhe brought up, and Comus
'nam'd.
'*Sec. Spirit.* Ill-omen'd birth to virtue and her
'ſons!
'*Firſt Spirit.* He ripe, and frolick of his full-
'grown age,
'Roving the Celtic and Iberian fields,
'At laſt betakes him to this ominous wood,
'And in thick ſhelter of black ſhades imbower'd,
'Excels his mother at her mighty art,
'Off'ring to ev'ry weary traveller
'His orient liquor in a chryſtal glaſs,
'To quench the drought of Phœbus; which as
'they taſte,
'(For moſt do taſte through fond intemp'rate thirſt)
'Soon as the poiſon works, their human coun-
'tenance,
'Th' expreſs reſemblance of the gods, is chang'd
'Into ſome brutiſh form of wolf or bear,
'Or ounce, or tyger, hog, or bearded goat,
'All other parts remaining as they were.
'Yet when he walks his tempting rounds, the
'ſorcerer
'By magic pow'r their human face reſtores,
'And outward beauty, to delude the ſight.
'*Sec. Spirit.* Loſe they the mem'ry of their for-
'mer ſtate?

' *First Spirit.* No, they (ſo perfect is their miſery)
' Not once perceive their foul diſfigurement,
' But boaſt themſelves more comely than before,
' And all their friends and native home forget,
' To roll with pleaſure in a ſenſual ſtye.
' *Sec. Spirit.* Degrading fall! from ſuch a dire
' diſtreſs
' What pain too great our mortal charge to ſave?
' *First Spirit.* For this, when any favour'd of
' high Jove
' Chances to paſs through this advent'rous glade,
' Swift as the ſparkle of a glancing ſtar
' I ſhoot from heaven, to give him ſafe convoy,
' As now I do: and opportune thou com'ſt
' To ſhare an office which thy nature loves.
' This be our taſk: but firſt I muſt put off
' Theſe my ſky-robes, ſpun out of Iris' woof,
' And take the weeds and likeneſs of a ſwain
' That to the ſervice of this houſe belongs,
' Who with his ſoft pipe and ſmooth-ditty'd ſong,
' Well knows to ſtill the wild winds when they
' roar,
' And huſh the waving woods; nor of leſs faith,
' And in this office of his mountain watch
' Likelieſt, and neareſt to the preſent aid
' Of this occaſion. Veil'd in ſuch diſguiſe,
' Be it my care the ſever'd youths to guide
' To their diſtreſs'd and lonely ſiſter; thine
' To chear her footſteps through the magic wood.
' Whatever bleſſed ſpirit hovers near,
' On errands bent to wand'ring mortals good,
' If need require, him ſummon to thy ſide.
' Unſeen of mortal eye, ſuch thoughts inſpire,
' Such heaven-born confidence, as need demands
' In hour of trial.
' *Sec. Spirit.* Swift as winged winds
' To my glad charge I fly. [*Exit.*
' *First Spirit.* ——— I'll wait a while
' To watch the ſorcerer; for I hear the tread
' Of hateful ſteps; I muſt be viewleſs now.'

Comus *enters with a charming-rod in one hand, his glaſs in the other, with him a rout of men and women, dreſſed as Bacchanals; they come in making a riotous and unruly noiſe, with torches in their hands.*

*Comus.* [*Speaks.*] The ſtar that bids the ſhepherd
Now the top of heaven doth hold; [fold,
And the gilded car of day
His glowing axle doth allay

In the ſteep Atlantic ſtream;
And the ſlope ſun his upward beams
Shoots againſt the duſky pole,
Pacing toward the other goal
Of his chamber in the eaſt:
Meanwhile, welcome joy and feaſt.

S O N G.

I.

Now Phœbus ſinketh in the weſt,
Welcome ſong, and welcome jeſt,
Midnight ſhout and revelry,
Tipſy dance and jollity:
Braid your locks with roſy twine,
Dropping odours, dropping wine.

II.

Rigour now is gone to bed,
And advice with ſcrup'lous head.
Strict age and ſour ſeverity,
With their grave ſaws, in ſlumber lie.

*Comus.* We that are of purer fire
Imitate the ſtarry choir,
Who in their nightly watchful ſpheres
Lead in ſwift round the months and years.
The ſounds and ſeas, with all their finny drove,
Now to the moon in wav'ring morrice move,
And on the tawny ſands and ſhelves
Trip the pert fairies and the dapper elves.

S O N G. *By a Woman.*

I.

By dimpled brook, and fountain brim,
The wood-nymphs, deck'd with daiſies trim,
Their merry wakes and paſtimes keep:
What has night to do with ſleep?

II.

Night has better ſweets to prove;
Venus now wakes, and wakens Love:
Come, let us our rites begin;
'Tis only day-light that makes ſin.

*Comus.* Hail, goddeſs of nocturnal ſport,
Dark-veil'd Cocytto, t' whom the ſecret flame
Of midnight torches burns; myſterious dame,
That ne'er art call'd, but when the dragon-womb
Of Stygian darkneſs ſpits her thickeſt gloom,
And makes one blot of all the air,
Stay thy cloudy ebon chair,
Wherein thou rid'ſt with Hecate, and befriend
Us thy vow'd prieſts, till utmoſt end
Of all thy dues be done, and none left out;
Ere the blabbing eaſtern ſcout,

The nice morn on th' Indian ſteep
From her cabin loop-hole peep,
And to the tell-tale ſun deſcry
Our conceal'd ſolemnity.

SONG. *By* Comus *and Woman.*

I.

From tyrant laws and cuſtoms free,
We follow ſweet variety:
By turns we drink, and dance, and ſing;
Love for ever on the wing.

II.

Why ſhould niggard rules controul
Tranſports of the jovial ſoul?
No dull ſtinting hour we own;
Pleaſure counts our time alone.

*Comus.* Come, knit hands, and beat the ground
In a light fantaſtic round.

A DANCE.

Break off, break off, I feel the diff'rent pace
Of ſome chaſte footing near about this ground.
Run to your ſhrouds, within theſe brakes and trees;
Our number may affright: ſome virgin, ſure,
(For ſo I can diſtinguiſh by mine art)
Benighted in theſe woods. Now to my charms,
And to my wily trains. I ſhall ere long
Be well ſtock'd with as fair a herd as graz'd
About my mother Circe. Thus I hurl
My dazzling ſpells into the ſpungy air,
Of pow'r to cheat the eye with blear illuſion,
And give it falſe preſentments, leſt the place
And my quaint habits breed aſtoniſhment,
And put the damſel to ſuſpicious flight;
Which muſt not be, for that's againſt my courſe.
I, under fair pretence of friendly ends,
And well-plac'd words of glozing courteſy,
Baited with reaſons not unplauſible,
Wind me into the eaſy-hearted man,
And hug him into ſnares. When once her eye
Hath met the virtue of this magic duſt,
I ſhall appear ſome harmleſs villager,
Whom thrift keeps up about his country gear.
But here ſhe comes; I fairly ſtep aſide
And hearken, if I may her buſineſs hear.

*Enter the Lady.*

*Lady.* This way the noiſe was, if mine ear be true,
My beſt guide now; methought it was the ſound
Of riot and ill-manag'd merriment,
' Such as the jocund flute, or gameſome pipe,
' Stirs up among the looſe unletter'd hinds,

'When, for their teeming flocks, and granges full,
'In wanton dance they praiſe the bounteous Pan,
'And thank the gods amiſs.' I ſhould be loth
To meet the rudeneſs and ſwill'd inſolence
Of ſuch late rioters; yet, O! where elſe
Shall I inform my unacquainted feet
In the blind mazes of this tangled wood?

*Comus.* [*Aſide.*] I'll eaſe her of that care, and be her guide.

*Lady.* My brothers, when they ſaw me weary'd out
'With this long way, reſolving here to lodge
'Under the ſpreading favour of theſe pines,'
Stepp'd, as they ſaid, to the next thicket ſide,
To bring me berries, or ſuch cooling fruit
As the kind hoſpitable woods provide.
'They left me then, when the grey hooded even,
'Like a ſad votariſt in palmer's weeds,
'Roſe from the hindmoſt wheels of Phœbus' wain;'
But where they are, and why they come not back,
Is now the labour of my thoughts; 'tis likelieſt
They had engag'd their wand'ring ſteps too far:
'This is the place, as well as I may gueſs,
'Whence even now the tumult of loud mirth
'Was rife and perfect in my liſt'ning ear;
'Yet nought but ſingle darkneſs do I find.
'What might this be? A thouſand fantaſies
'Begin to throng into my memory,
'Of calling ſhapes, and beck'ning ſhadows dire,
'And airy tongues, that ſyllable men's names
'On ſands, and ſhores, and deſart wilderneſſes.
'Theſe thoughts may ſtartle well, but not aſtound
'The virtuous mind, that ever walks attended
'By a ſtrong-ſiding champion, conſcience.
'Oh, welcome, pure-ey'd faith, white-handed hope,
'Thou hov'ring angel, girt with golden wings,
'And thou unblemiſh'd form of chaſtity;
'I ſee you viſibly, and now believe
'That he, the Supreme Good (t' whom all things ill
'Are but as ſlaviſh officers of vengeance)
'Would ſend a gliſt'ring guardian, if need were,
'To keep my life and honour unaſſail'd.
'Was I deceiv'd, or did a ſable cloud
'Turn forth her ſilver lining on the night?
'I did not err; there does a ſable cloud
'Turn forth her ſilver lining on the night,
'And caſts a gleam over this tufted grove.'
I cannot hollow to my brothers; but
Such noiſe as I can make to be heard fartheſt
I'll venture; for my new-enliven'd ſpirits

Prompt me; and they, perhaps, are not far off.

S O N G.

Sweet Echo, ſweeteſt nymph, that liv'ſt unſeen
Within thy airy cell,
By ſlow Meander's margent green,
And in the violet-embroider'd vale,
Where the love-lorn nightingale
Nightly to thee her ſad ſong mourneth well,
Can'ſt thou not tell me of a gentle pair,
That likeſt thy Narciſſus are?
Oh, if thou have
Hid them in ſome flow'ry cave,
Tell me but where,
Sweet queen of parly, daughter of the ſphere;
So may'ſt thou be tranſlated to the ſkies,
And give reſounding grace to all heav'n's harmonies.

*Comus.* [*Aſide.*] Can any mortal mixture of earth's mould
Breathe ſuch divine inchanting raviſhment?
'Sure ſomething holy lodges in that breaſt,
'And with theſe raptures moves the vocal air
'To teſtify his hidden reſidence:
'How ſweetly did they float upon the wings
'Of ſilence, through the empty-vaulted night,
'At ev'ry fall ſmoothing the raven-down
'Of darkneſs, till it ſmil'd! I have oft heard
'My mother Circe, with the Sirens three,
'Amidſt the flow'ry-kirtled Naiads,
'Culling their potent herbs and baleful drugs;
'Who, as they ſung, would take the priſon'd ſoul,
'And lap it in Elyſium: Scylla wept,
'And chid her barking waves into attention,
'And fell Charybdis murmur'd ſoft applauſe:
'Yet they in pleaſing ſlumber lull'd the ſenſe,
'And ſweet in madneſs robb'd it of itſelf.
'But ſuch a ſacred and home-felt delight,
'Such ſober certainty of waking bliſs,
'I never heard till now'——I'll ſpeak to her,
And ſhe ſhall be my queen.——Hail, foreign wonder,
Whom certain theſe rough ſhades did never breed,
Unleſs the goddeſs that in rural ſhrine
Dwell'ſt here with Pan, or Silvan, by bleſs'd ſong
Forbidding ev'ry bleak unkindly fog
To touch the proſp'rous growth of this tall wood.

*Lady.* Nay, gentle ſhepherd, ill is loſt that praiſe
That is addreſs'd to unattending ears:
Not any boaſt of ſkill, but extreme ſhift
How to regain my ſever'd company,
Compell'd me to awake the courteous Echo,

To give me anſwer from her moſſy couch.
*Comus.* What chance, good lady, hath bereft you thus?
*Lady.* Dim darkneſs, and this leafy labyrinth.
*Comus.* Could that divide you from near-uſhering guides?
*Lady.* They left me weary on a graſſy turf.
' *Comus.* By falſehood, or diſcourteſy? or why?
' *Lady.*' To ſeek i' th' vally ſome cool friendly ſpring.
*Comus.* And left your fair ſide all unguarded, lady?
*Lady.* They were but twain, and purpos'd quick return.
' *Comus.* Perhaps foreſtalling night prevented them?
' *Lady.* How eaſy my misfortune is to hit!'
*Comus.* Imports their loſs, beſide the preſent need?
*Lady.* No leſs than if I ſhould my brothers loſe.
*Comus.* Were they of manly prime, or youthful bloom?
*Lady.* As ſmooth as Hebe's their unrazor'd lips.
*Comus.* Two ſuch I ſaw, ' what time the labour'd ox
' In his looſe traces from the furrow came,
' And the ſwinkt hedger at his ſupper ſat;
' I ſaw them' under a ' green' mantling vine,
That crawls along the ſide of yon ſmall hill,
Plucking ripe cluſters from the tender ſhoots;
Their port was more than human: ' as they ſtood,
' I took it for a fairy viſion
' Of ſome gay creatures of the element,
' That in the colours of the rainbow live,
' And play i' th' plaited clouds. I was awe ſtruck,
' And as I paſſed, I worſhipp'd;' if thoſe you ſeek,
It were a journey like the path to heav'n,
To help you find them.
*Lady.* Gentle villager,
What readieſt way would bring me to that place?
' *Comus.* Due weſt it riſes from this ſhrubby point.
' *Lady.* To find out that, good ſhepherd, I ſuppoſe,
' In ſuch a ſcant allowance of ſtar-light,
' Would over-taſk the beſt land-pilot's art,
' Without the ſure gueſs of well-practis'd feet.
*Comus.* I know each lane, and ev'ry alley green,
Dingle, or buſhy dell, of this wild wood,
' And ev'ry boſky bourn from ſide to ſide,'
My daily walks and ancient neighbourhood:
And if your ſtray attendance be yet lodg'd,

Or ſhroud within theſe limits, I ſhall know
Ere morrow wake, ‘ or the low-rooſted lark
‘ From her thatch'd pallat rouſe: if,' *or grant it*
otherwiſe,
I can conduct you, lady, to a low
But loyal cottage, where you may be ſafe
Till farther queſt.

*Lady.* Shepherd, I take thy word,
And truſt thy honeſt offer'd courteſy,
‘ Which oft is ſooner found in lowly ſheds
‘ With ſmoaky rafters, than in tap'ſtry halls
‘ And courts of princes, where it firſt was nam'd,
‘ And yet is moſt pretended.' In a place,
Leſs warranted that this, or leſs ſecure,
I cannot be, that I ſhould fear to change it.
Eye me, bleſs'd Providence, and ſquare my trial
To my proportion'd ſtrength!—Shepherd, lead on.
[*Exeunt.*

*Enter* Comus's *crew from behind the trees.*

SONG. *By a man.*

I.

Fly ſwiftly, ye minutes, till Comus receive
The nameleſs ſoft tranſports that beauty can give;
The bowl's frolick joys let him teach her to prove,
And ſhe in return yield the raptures of love.

II.

Without love and wine, wit and beauty are vain,
All grandeur inſipid, and riches a pain,
The moſt ſplendid palace grows dark as the grave:
Love and wine give, ye gods! or take back what you gave.

CHORUS.

Away, away, away!
To Comus' court repair;
There night out-ſhines the day,
There yields the melting fair.

## ACT II.

‘ *Enter the two Brothers.*

‘ *E. Bro.* UNmuffle, ye faint ſtars; and thou, fair moon,
‘ That wont'ſt to love the travellers benizon,
‘ Stoop thy pale viſage through an amber cloud,
‘ And diſinherit chaos, that reigns here
‘ In double night of darkneſs and of ſhades:
‘ Or if your influence be quite damm'd up
‘ With black uſurping miſts, ſome gentle taper,

‘ Though a ruſh candle from the wicker hole
‘ Of ſome clay habitation, viſit us
‘ With thy long levell'd rule of ſtreaming light;
‘ And thou ſhalt be our ſtar of Arcady,
‘ Or Tyrian cynoſure.
‘ *Y. Broth.* Or, if our eyes
‘ Be barr'd that happineſs, might we but hear
‘ The flolded flocks penn'd in their wattled cot,
‘ Or ſound of paſt'ral reed with oaten ſtops;
‘ Or whiſtle from the lodge, or village-cock
‘ Count the night-watches to his feathery dames,
‘ 'Twould be ſome ſolace yet; ſome little chearing
‘ In this cloſe dungeon of innum'rous boughs.
‘ But, Oh! that hapleſs virgin, our loſt ſiſter!
‘ Where may ſhe wander now, whither betake her
‘ From the chill dew, amongſt rude burs and thiſtles?
‘ Perhaps ſome cold bank is her bolſter now,
‘ Or 'gainſt the rugged bark of ſome broad elm
‘ Leans her unpillow'd head, fraught with ſad fears.
‘ What if in wild amazement and affright,
‘ Or, while we ſpeak, within the direful graſp
‘ Of ſavage hunger, or of ſavage heat?
‘ *E. Bro.* Peace, brother; be not over exquiſite,
‘ To caſt the faſhion of uncertain evils;
‘ For grant they be ſo, while they reſt unknown,
‘ What need a man foreſtal his date of grief,
‘ And run to meet what he would moſt avoid?
‘ Or if they be but falſe alarms of fear,
‘ How bitter is ſuch ſelf-deluſion!
‘ I do not think my ſiſter ſo to ſeek,
‘ Or ſo unprincipled in virtue's book,
‘ And the ſweet peace that goodneſs boſoms ever,
‘ As that the ſingle want of light and noiſe
‘ (Not being in danger, as I truſt ſhe is not)
‘ Could ſtir the conſtant mood of her calm thoughts,
‘ And put them into miſbecoming plight.
‘ Virtue could ſee to do what virtue would
‘ By her own radiant light, though ſun and moon
‘ Were in the flat ſea ſunk; and wiſdom's ſelf
‘ Oft ſeeks to ſweet retired ſolitude;
‘ Where, with her beſt nurſe, contemplation,
‘ She plumes her feathers, and lets grow her wings,
‘ That in the various buſtle of reſort
‘ Were all too ruffled, and ſometimes impair'd.
‘ He that has light within his own clear breaſt,
‘ May ſit i' th' center, and enjoy bright day:
‘ But he that hides a dark ſoul, and foul thoughts,
‘ Benighted walks under the mid-day ſun;
‘ Himſelf is his own dungeon.

'Y. *Bro.* 'Tis moſt true,
'That muſing meditation moſt affects
'The penſive ſecrecy of deſart cell,
'Far from the chearful haunt of men and herds,
'And ſits as ſafe as in a ſenate houſe:
'For who would rob a hermit of his weeds,
'His few books, or his beads, or maple diſh,
'Or do his grey hairs any violence?
'But beauty, like the fair Heſperian tree
'Laden with blooming gold, had need the guard
'Of dragon watch with uninchanted eye,
'To ſave her bloſſoms and defend her fruit
'From the raſh hand of bold incontinence.
'You may as well ſpread out the unſunn'd heaps
'Of miſers' treaſure by an outlaw's den,
'And tell me it is ſafe, as bid me hope
'Danger will wink on opportunity,
'And let a ſingle helpleſs maiden paſs
'Uninjur'd, in this wild ſurrounding waſte.
'Of night or lonelineſs it recks me not:
'I fear the dread events that dog them both,
'Leſt ſome ill-greeting touch attempt the perſon
'Of our unowned ſiſter.
'*E. Bro.* I do not, brother,
'Infer, as if I thought my ſiſter's ſtate
'Secure without all doubt or controverſy:
'Yet, where an equal poiſe of hope and fear
'Does arbitrate th' event, my nature is
'That I incline to hope rather than fear,
'And gladly baniſh ſquint ſuſpicion.
'My ſiſter is not ſo defenceleſs left
'As you imagine; ſhe has a hidden ſtrength,
'Which you remember not.
'*Y. Bro.* What hidden ſtrength,
'Unleſs the ſtrength of heav'n, if you mean that?
'*E. Bro.* I mean that too; but yet a hidden
'ſtrength,
'Which, if heav'n gave it, may be term'd her own:
'Tis chaſtity, my brother, chaſtity.
'She that has that, is clad in complete ſteel;
'And, like a quiver'd nymph with arrows keen,
'May trace huge foreſts, and unharbour'd heaths,
'Infamous hills, and ſandy perilous wilds;
'Where, through the ſacred rays of chaſtity,
'No ſavage fierce, bandit, or mountaineer,
'Will dare to ſoil her virgin purity:
'Yea there, where very deſolation dwells,
'By grots and caverns ſhagg'd with horrid ſhades,
'She may paſs on with unblench'd majeſty;
'Be it not done in pride or in preſumption.

'Y. Bro. How gladly would I have my terrors
'hush'd,
'By crediting the wonders you relate!
'E. Bro. Some say, no evil thing that walks by
'night,
'In fog, or fire, by lake, or mooriſh fen,
'Blue meagre hag, or ſtubborn unlaid ghoſt,
'That breaks his magic chains at curfew time,
'No goblin, or ſwaft fairy of the mine,
'Hath hurtful pow'r o'er true virginity;
'Do ye believe me yet, or ſhall I call
'Antiquity from the old ſchools of Greece,
'To teſtify the arms of chaſtity?
'Hence had the huntreſs Dian her dread bow,
'Fair ſilver-ſhafted queen, for ever chaſte,
'Wherewith ſhe tam'd the brinded lioneſs
'And ſpotted mountain-pard, but ſet at nought
'The friv'lous bolt of Cupid; gods and men
'Fear'd her ſtern frown, and ſhe was queen o' th'
'woods.
'What was the ſnaky-headed Gorgon ſhield,
'That wiſe Minerva wore, unconquer'd virgin,
'Wherewith ſhe freez'd her foes to congeal'd ſtone,
'But rigid looks of chaſte auſterity,
'And noble grace, that daſh'd brute violence
'With ſudden adoration, and blank awe?
'Y. Bro. But what are virtue's awful charms to
'thoſe
'Who cannot rev'rence what they never knew?
'E. Bro. So dear to heav'n is ſaintly chaſtity,
'That when a ſoul is found ſincerely ſo,
'A thouſand livery'd angels lacquey her,
'Driving far off each thing of ſin and guilt,
'And in clear dream and ſolemn viſion
'Tell her of things that no groſs ear can hear;
'Till oft converſe with heav'nly habitants
'Begin to caſt a beam on th' outward ſhape,
'The unpolluted temple of the mind,
'And turn it by degrees to the ſoul's eſſence,
'Till all be made immortal.
'Y. Bro. Happy ſtate,
'Beyond belief of vice!
'E. Bro. But when vile luſt,
'By unchaſte looks, looſe geſtures, and foul talk,
'But moſt by lewd and lavish act of ſin,
'Lets in defilement to the inward parts,
'The ſoul grows clotted by contagion,
'Imbodies, and imbrutes, till ſhe quite loſe
'The divine property of her firſt being.

'Such are thoſe thick and gloomy ſhadows damp,
'Oft ſeen in charnel-vaults and ſepulchres,
'Ling'ring and ſitting by a new-made grave,
'As loth to leave the body that it lov'd,
'And link'd itſelf in carnal ſenſuality
'To a degen'rate and degraded ſtate.
'*Y. Bro.* How charming is divine philoſophy!
'Not harſh and crabbed, as dull fools ſuppoſe,
'But muſical as is Apollo's lute,
'And a perpetual feaſt of nectar'd ſweets,
'Where no crude ſurfeit reigns.'
*E. Bro.* ——Liſt, liſt! I hear
Some far-off hallow break the ſilent air.
*Y. Bro.* Methought ſo too; what ſhould it be?
*E. Bro.* For certain,
Either ſome one like us night-founder'd here,
Or elſe ſome neighbour wood-man, or, at worſt,
Some roving robber calling to his fellows.
*Y. Bro.* Heav'n keep my ſiſter. Again! again! and near!
Beſt draw, and ſtand upon our guard.
*E. Bro.* I'll hallow;
If he be friendly, he comes well; if not,
Defence is a good cauſe, and heav'n be for us.

*Enter the firſt Attendant Spirit, habited like a ſhepherd.*

*Y. Bro.* That hallow I ſhould know——What are you; Speak?
'Come not too near, you fall on iron ſtakes elſe.'
'*Firſt Spirit.* What voice is that? My young lord! Speak again?
*Y. Bro.* O brother, 'tis my father's ſhepherd, ſure.
*E. Bro.* Thyrſis! whoſe artful ſtrains have oft delay'd
The huddling brook to hear his madrigal,
And ſweeten'd ev'ry muſt-roſe of the dale?
How cam'ſt thou here, good ſwain? Has any ram
Slip'd from the fold, or young kid loſt his dam,
Or ſtraggling wether the pent flock forſook?
How couldſt thou find this dark ſequeſter'd nook?
'*Firſt Spirit.* O my lov'd maſter's heir, and his next joy!
'I came not here on ſuch a trivial toy
'As a ſtray'd ewe, or to purſue the ſtealth
'Of pilf'ring wolf; not all the fleecy wealth
'That doth enrich theſe downs is worth a thought,
'To this my errand, and the care it brought.
'But, O!' *where is* my virgin lady, where is ſhe?
How chance ſhe is not in your company?

*E. Bro.* To tell thee ſadly, ſhepherd, without blame,
Or our neglect, we loſt her as we came.

'*Firſt' Spirit.* Ah, me! unhappy! then my fears are true.

*E. Bro.* What fears, good Thyrſis? pr'ythee briefly ſhew.

'*Firſt' Spirit.* I'll tell ye; 'tis not vain, nor fabulous,
'(Tho' ſo eſteem'd by ſhallow ignorance)
'What the ſage poets, taught by th' heav'nly muſe,
'Story'd of old in high immortal verſe,
'Of dire chimeras, and inchanted iſles,
'And rifted rocks whoſe entrance leads to hell;
'For ſuch there be; but unbelief is blind.

'*E. Bro.* Proceed, good ſhepherd; I am all attention.'

'*Firſt' Spirit.* Within the boſom of this hideous wood,
Immur'd in cypreſs ſhades, a ſorcerer dwells,
Of Bacchus and of Circe born, great Comus;
Deep ſkill'd in all his mother's witcheries,
'*And wanton as his father.*
'And here to ev'ry thirſty wanderer,
'By ſly enticements, gives his baneful cup,
'With many murmurs mix'd, whoſe pleaſing poiſon,
'The viſage quite transforms of him that drinks,
'And the inglorious likeneſs of a beaſt
'Fixes inſtead, unmoulding reaſon's mintage
'Character'd in the face.' This have I learnt
Tending my flock hard by, i' th' hilly crofts
'That brow this bottom glade,' whence night by night
He and his monſtrous rout are heard to howl
'Like ſtabled wolves, or tygers at their prey;
'Doing abhorred rites to Hecate,
'In their obſcured haunts and inmoſt bow'rs,'
Yet have they many baits and guileful ſpells,
And beauty's tempting ſemblance can put on
T' inveigle and invite th' unwary ſenſe
'Of them that paſs unweeting by the way.'
But hark! the beaten timbrel's jarring ſound,
And wild tumultuous mirth, proclaim their preſence!
On ward they move; 'and ſee! a blazing torch
'Gleams through the ſhade,' and this way guides their ſteps.
Let us withdraw awhile, and watch their motions.

[*They retire.*

*Enter* Comus's *crew revelling, and by turns careſſing each other, till they obſerve the two Brothers: then the Elder Brother advances and ſpeaks.*

*E. Bro.* What are you? Speak! that thus in wanton riot
And midnight revelry, like drunken Bacchanals,
Invade the ſilence of theſe lonely ſhades?

*First Woman.* Ye godlike youths, 'whoſe radiant 'forms excel
'The blooming grace of Maia's winged ſon,'
Bleſs the propitious ſtar that led you to us;
We are the happieſt of the race of mortals,
Of freedom, mirth, and joy, the only heirs:
But you ſhall ſhare them with us; for this cup,
This nectar'd cup, the ſweet aſſurance gives
Of preſent, and the pledge of future bliſs.

[*She offers 'em the cup, which they both put by.*

SONG. *By a Man.*

I.

By the gaily circling glaſs
We can ſee how minutes paſs;
By the hollow caſk are told
How the waining night grows old.

II.

Soon, too ſoon, the buſy day
Drives us from our ſport and play.
What have we with day to do?
Sons of care, 'twas made for you.

*E. Bro.* Forbear, nor offer us the poiſon'd ſweets,
That thus have render'd thee thy ſex's ſhame,
All ſenſe of honour baniſh'd from thy breaſt.

SONG.

I.

'Fame's an Echo, prattling double,
'An empty, airy, glitt'ring bubble;
'A breath can ſwell, a breath can ſink it,
'The wiſe not worth their keeping think it.

II.

'Why then, why ſuch toil and pain
'Fame's uncertain ſmiles to gain?
'Like her ſiſter Fortune, blind,
'To the beſt ſhe's oft unkind,
'And the worſt her favour find.

'*E. Bro.* By her own ſentence Virtue ſtands 'abſolv'd, but

'Nor aſks an echo from the tongues of men,
'To tell what nobly to herſelf ſhe proves.
'Who wants his own, no other praiſe enjoys;
'His ear receives it as a fulſome tale,
'To which his heart in ſecret gives the lie.

'*E. Bro.* She's gone! May ſcorn purſue her wanton arts,
'And all the painted charms that vice can wear.
'Yet oft o'er credulous youth ſuch ſyrens triumph,
'And lead their captive ſenſe in chains as ſtrong
'As links of adamant. Let us be free;
'And, to ſecure our freedom, virtuous.
'*Y. Bro.* But ſhould our helpleſs ſiſter meet the 'rage
'Of this inſulting troop, what could ſhe do?
'What hope, what comfort, what ſupport were left?
'*Spirit.* She meets not them: but yet, if right 'I gueſs,
'A harder trial on her virtue waits.
'*E. Bro.* Protect her, heaven! But whence this 'ſad conjecture?
'*Spirit.* This evening late, by then the chew- 'ing flocks
'Had ta'en their ſupper on the ſav'ry herb
'Of knot-graſs dew-beſprent, and were in fold,
'I ſat me down to watch upon a bank
'With ivy canopy'd, and interwove
'With flaunting honeyſuckle, and began,
'Wrap'd in a pleaſing fit of melancholy,
'To meditate my rural minſtrelſy,
'Till fancy had her fill; but ere a cloſe,
'The wonted roar was up amidſt the woods,
'And fill'd the air with barbarous diſſonance;
'At which I ceas'd, and liſten'd them awhile.
'*Y. Bro.* What follow'd then? Oh! if our 'helpleſs ſiſter——
'*Spirit.* Straight an unuſual ſtop of ſudden ſilence
'Gave reſpite to the drowſy flighted ſteeds
'That draw the litter of cloſe curtain'd ſleep.
'At laſt a ſoft and ſolemn breathing ſound
'Roſe like a ſteam of rich diſtill'd perfumes,
'And ſtole upon the air, that e'en ſilence
'Was took ere ſhe was 'ware, and wiſh'd ſhe might
'Deny her nature, and be never more,
'Still to be ſo diſplac'd. I was all ear,
'And took in ſtrains that might create a ſoul
'Under the ribs of death——But, oh! ere long,
'Too well I did perceive it was the voice
'Of my moſt honour'd lady, your dear ſiſter.
'*Y. Bro.* O my foreboding heart! Too true my 'fears——
'*Spirit.* Amaz'd I ſtood, harrow'd with grief 'and fear;
'And O! poor helpleſs nightingale, thought I,

' How ſweet thou ſing'ſt, how near the deadly
' ſnare;
' Then down the lawns I ran with headlong haſte,
' Thro' paths and turnings often trod by day,
' Till guided by my ear, I found the place
' Where the damn'd wizard, hid in ſly diſguiſe,
' (For ſo by certain ſigns I knew) had met
' Already, ere my beſt ſpeed cou'd prevent
' The aidleſs innocent lady, his wiſh'd prey;
' Who gently aſk'd if he had ſeen ſuch two,
' Suppoſing him ſome neighbour villager.
' Longer I durſt not ſtay; but ſoon I gueſs'd
' Ye were the two ſhe meant: with that I ſprung
' Into ſwift flight, till I had found you here:
' But farther know I not.
' *Y. Bro.* O night and ſhades!
' How are ye join'd with hell in triple knot
' Againſt th' unarmed weakneſs of one virgin,
' Alone and helpleſs! Is this the confidence
' You gave me, brother?
' *E. Bro.* Yes; and keep it ſtill,
' Lean on it ſafely; not a period
' Shall be unſaid for me. Againſt the threats
' Of malice, or of ſorcery, or that pow'r
' Which erring men call chance; this I hold firm,
' Virtue may be aſſail'd, but never hurt,
' Surpriz'd by unjuſt force, but not inthrall'd;
' Yea, even that which miſchief meant moſt
' harm,
' Shall, in the happy trial, prove moſt glory.
' But evil on itſelf ſhall back recoil,
' And mix no more with goodneſs; when at laſt
' Gather'd like ſcum, and ſettled to itſelf,
' It ſhall be in eternal reſtleſs change,
' Self-fed, and ſelf-conſum'd. If this fail,
' The pillar'd firmament is rottenneſs,
' And earth's baſe built on ſtubble. But come,
' let's on;
' Againſt th' oppoſing will and arm of heav'n
' May never this juſt ſword be lifted up;
' But for that damn'd magician, let him be girt
' With all the grieſly legions that troop
' Under the ſooty flag of Acheron,
' Harpies and hydras; or all the monſtrous forms
' 'Twixt Africa and Inde, I'll find him out,
' And force him to reſtore his purchaſe back,
' Or drag him by the curls to a foul death,
' Curs'd as his life.
' *Spirit.* Alas! good vent'rous youth,
' I love thy courage yet, and bold empriſe;

'Nay, ſlander'd innocence muſt feel a peace,
'An inward peace, which flatter'd guilt ne'er knew.'
*First Woman.* Oh! how unſeemly ſhews in blooming youth
Such grey ſeverity!——But come with us,
We to the bow'r of bliſs will guide your ſteps;
There you ſhall taſte the joys that nature ſheds
On the gay ſpring of life, youth's flow'ry prime,
From morn to noon, from noon to dewy eve,
Each riſing hour by riſing pleaſures mark'd.

SONG. *By a Woman in a paſtoral habit.*

I.

Would you taſte the noon-tide air;
To yon fragrant bower repair,
Where, woven with the poplar bough,
The mantling vine will ſhelter you.

II.

Down each ſide a fountain flows,
Tinkling, murmuring, as it goes,
Lightly o'er the moſſy ground,
Sultry Phœbus ſcorching round.

III.

Round, the languid herds and ſheep
Stretch'd o'er ſunny hillocks ſleep,
While on the hyacinth and roſe
The fair does all alone repoſe.

IV.

All alone——and in her arms
Your breaſt may beat to love's alarms,
Till bleſs'd and bleſſing, you ſhall own,
The joys of love are joys alone.

'*E. Bro.* How low ſinks beauty, when by vice
'debas'd!
'How fair that form, if virtue dwelt within!
'But, from this ſhameleſs advocate of ſhame,
'To me the warbled ſong harſh diſcord grates.
'*Y. Bro.* Short is the courſe of ev'ry lawleſs
'pleaſure;
'Grief, like a ſhade, on all its footſteps waits,
'Scarce viſible in joy's meridian height;
'But downward as its blaze declining ſpeeds,
'The dwarfiſh ſhadow to a giant ſpreads.'
*First Woman.* No more; theſe formal maxims miſbecome you,
They only ſuit ſuſpicious ſhrivell'd age.

SONG. *By a Man and two Women.*

I.

Live, and love, enjoy the fair,
Ban ſh ſorrow, baniſh care;

Mind not what old dotards ſay;
Age has had his ſhare of play,
But youth's ſport begins to-day.

II.

From the fruits of ſweet delight
Let not ſcare-crow virtue fright.
Here in pleaſure's vineyard we
Rove, like birds, from tree to tree,
Careleſs, airy, gay and free.

*E. Bro.* How can your impious tongues profane the name
Of ſacred virtue, and yet promiſe pleaſure
In lying ſongs of vanity and vice?
From virtue ſever'd, pleaſure phrenzy grows,
'The gay delirium of the fev'riſh mind,
'And always flies at reaſon's cool return.
'*Firſt Woman.* Perhaps it may; perhaps the 'ſweeteſt joys
'Of love itſelf from paſſion's folly ſpring;
'But ſay, does wiſdom greater bliſs beſtow?
'*E. Bro.* Alike from love's and pleaſure's path
'In ſenſual folly blindly ſeeking both, ['you ſtray,
'Your pleaſure riot, luſt your boaſted love;
'Capricious, wanton, bold, and brutal luſt,
'Is meanly ſelfiſh; when reſiſted, cruel;
'And, like the blaſt of peſtilential winds,
'Taints the ſweet bloom of nature's faireſt forms.
'But love, like od'rous zephyr's grateful breath,
'Repays the flow'r that ſweetneſs which it borrows;
'Uninjuring, uninjur'd, lovers move
'In their own ſphere of happineſs content,
'By mutual truth avoiding mutual blame.'
But we forget! Who hears the voice of truth,
In noiſy riot and intemp'rance drown'd?
Thyrſis be then our guide! we'll follow thee,
And ſome good angel bear a ſhield before us!

[*Exeunt Brothers and Spirit.*

*Firſt Woman.* Come, come, my friends, and partners of my joys,
Leave to theſe pedant youths their bookiſh dreams;
'Poor blinded boys, by their blind guides miſled!
'A beardleſs cynic is the ſhame of nature,'
Beyond the cure of this inſpiring cup;
'And my contempt, at beſt, my pity moves.'
Away, nor waſte a moment more about 'em.

*Chorus.* Away, away, away!
To Comus' court repair;
There night outſhines the day,
There yields the melting fair.

[*Exeunt ſinging.*

'But here thy ſword can do thee little ſtead:
'Far other arms, and other weapons muſt
'Be thoſe that quell the might of helliſh charms.
'He, with his bare wand, can unthread thy joints,
'And crumble all thy ſinews.
'*E. Bro.* Why pr'ythee, ſhepherd,
'How durſt thou then thyſelf approach ſo near
'As to make this relation?
'*Spirit.* A ſhepherd lad,
'Of ſmall regard to ſee to, yet well ſkill'd
'In every virtuous plant and healing herb
'That ſpreads her verdant leaf to the morning ray,
'Has ſhewn me ſimples of a thouſand names,
'Telling their ſtrange and vigorous faculties.
'Among the reſt, a ſmall unſightly root,
'But of divine effect, he cull'd me out;
'And bad me keep it as of ſov'reign uſe
'Gainſt all inchantment, mildew, blaſt, or damp,
'Or ghaſtly fury's apparition.
'I purs'd it up. If you have this about you,
'(As I will give you when you go) you may
'Boldly aſſault the necromancer's hall;
'Where if he be, with dauntleſs hardyhood,
'And brandiſh'd blade, ruſh on him, break his glaſs,
'And ſhed the luſcious liquor on the ground.
'But ſeize his wand; tho' he and his curs'd crew
'Fierce ſign of battle make, and menace high,
'Or like the ſons of Vulcan vomit ſmoke,
'Yet will they ſoon retire if he but ſhrink.'

## ACT III.

'SCENE *opens, and diſcovers' a magnificent hall in* Comus's *Palace,* 'ſet off with all the gay 'decorations proper for an ancient banquetting-'room.' Comus *and attendants ſtand on each ſide of the lady, who is ſeated in an inchanted chair;* 'and by her looks and geſtures expreſſes great ſigns 'of uneaſineſs and melancholy.'

Comus *ſpeaks.*

'HENCE, loathed melancholy,
'Of Cerberus and blackeſt midnight born,
'In Stygian cave forlorn.
'Mongſt horrid ſhapes, and ſhrieks, and ſights unholy,
'Find out ſome uncouth cell,
'Where brooding darkneſs ſpreads his jealous wings,
'And the night-raven ſings;
'There, under ebon-ſhades, and low-brow'd rocks,

' As ragged as thy locks,
' In dark Cimmerian defart ever dwell.
' But' come, thou goddeſs fair and free,
In heaven yclep'd Euphroſyne,
And by men, Heart-eaſing Mirth,
Whom lovely Venus at a birth
With two ſiſter graces more,
To ivy-crowned Bacchus bore.
Haſte thee, nymph, and bring with thee
Jeſt and youthful jollity,
Quips and cranks, and wanton wiles,
Nods and becks, and wreathed ſmiles,
Such as hang on Hebe's cheek,
And love to live in dimple ſleek;
Sport, that wrinkled Care derides,
And Laughter holding both his ſides.
Come, and trip it as you go,
On the light fantaſtic toe;
And in thy right hand lead with thee
The mountain-nymph, ſweet Liberty.

[*Whilſt theſe lines are repeating, enter a nymph repreſenting* Euphroſyne, *or Mirth; who advances to the lady, and ſings the following ſong.*

SONG.

I.

Come, come, bid adieu to fear,
Love and harmony live here.
No domeſtic jealous jars,
Buzzing ſlanders, wordy wars,
In my preſence will appear;
Love and harmony reign here.

II.

Sighs to amorous ſighs returning,
Pulſes beating, boſoms burning,
Boſoms with warm wiſhes panting,
Words to ſpeak thoſe wiſhes wanting,
Are the only tumults here,
All the woes you need to fear;
Love and harmony reign here.

*Lady.* How long muſt I, by magic fetters chain'd
To this deteſted ſeat, hear odious ſtrains
Of ſhameleſs folly which my ſoul abhors?

*Comus.* Ye ſedge-crown'd Naiads, by twilight ſeen
Along Meander's mazy borders green,
At Comus' call appear in all your azure ſheen.

[*He waves his wand, the Naiads enter, and range themſelves in order to dance.*

Now ſoftly flow let Lydian meaſures move,

And breathe the pleaſing pangs of gentle love.
‘ In ſwimming dance on air's ſoft billows float,
‘ Soft ſwell your boſoms with the ſwelling note;
‘ With pliant arm in graceful motion vie,
‘ Now ſunk with eaſe, with eaſe now lifted high;
‘ Till lively geſture each fond care reveal,
‘ That muſic can expreſs, or paſſion feel.’

[‘ *The Naiads dance a ſlow dance agreeable to* ‘ *the ſubject of the preceding lines, and ex-* ‘ *preſſive of the paſſion of love.*

[‘ *After this dance the paſtoral nymph advances ſlow, with a melancholy and deſponding air, to the ſide of the ſtage, and repeats, by way of ſoliloquy, the firſt ſix lines, and then ſings the ballad. In the mean time ſhe is obſerv'd by* Euphroſyne, *who, by her geſture, expreſſes to the audience her different ſentiments of the ſubject of her complaint, ſuitably to the character of their ſeveral ſongs.*

## RECITATIVE.

How gentle was my Damon's air!
Like ſunny beams his golden hair,
His voice was like the nightingale's,
More ſweet his breath than flow'ry vales.
How hard ſuch beauties to reſign!
And yet that cruel taſk is mine!

## A BALLAD.

I.

On every hill, in every grove,
Along the margin of each ſtream,
Dear conſcious ſcenes of former love
I mourn, and Damon is my theme.
The hills, the groves, the ſtreams remain,
But Damon there I ſeek in vain.

II.

‘ Now to the moſſy cave I fly,
‘ Where to my ſwain I oft have ſung,
‘ Well pleas'd the browſing goats to ſpy,
‘ As o'er the airy ſteep they hung.
‘ The moſſy cave, the goats remain,
‘ But Damon there I ſeek in vain.

III.

‘ Now through the winding vale I paſs,
‘ And ſigh to ſee the well-known ſhade;
‘ I weep, and kiſs the bended graſs,
‘ Where love and Damon fondly play'd.
‘ The vale, the ſhade, the graſs remain,
‘ But Damon there I ſeek in vain.’

IV.

From hill, from dale, each charm is fled,
Groves, flocks, and fountains pleaſe no more,
Each flower in pity droops its head,
All nature does my loſs deplore.
All, all reproach the faithleſs ſwain,
Yet Damon ſtill I ſeek in vain.

RECITATIVE. *By Euphroſyne,*

Love, the greateſt bliſs below,
How to taſte few women know;
Fewer ſtill the way have hit
How a fickle ſwain to quit.
Simple nymphs, then learn of me,
How to treat inconſtancy.

BALLAD.

I.

The wanton god, that pierces hearts,
Dips in gall his pointed darts;
But the nymph diſdains to pine,
Who bathes the wound with roſy wine.

II.

Farewel lovers, when they're cloy'd;
If I'm ſcorn'd, becauſe enjoy'd,
Sure the ſqueamiſh fops are free
To rid me of dull company.

III.

They have charms whilſt mine can pleaſe,
I love them much, but more my eaſe;
Nor jealous fears my love moleſt,
Nor faithleſs vows ſhall break my reſt.

IV.

Why ſhould they e'er give me pain,
Who to give me joy diſdain?
All I hope of mortal man,
Is to love me—whilſt he can.

*Comus ſpeaks.*

Caſt thine eyes around and ſee,
How from every element
Nature's ſweets are cull'd for thee,
And her choiceſt bleſſings ſent.
Hither, ſummer, autumn, ſpring,
Hither all your tributes bring;
All on bended knee be ſeen,
Paying homage to your queen.

[*The ſecond attendant* Spirit *enters gradually in a ſplendid machine, repeating the following lines to the lady, and ſings, remaining ſtill inviſible to* Comus *and his crew.*

From the realms of peace above,
From the ſource of heav'nly love,
From the ſtarry throne of Jove,
Where tuneful muſes, in a glitt'ring ring,
To the celeſtial lyre's eternal ſtring,
Patient Virtue's triumph ſing:
To theſe dim labyrinths, where mortals ſtray,
Maz'd in paſſion's pathleſs way,
To ſave thy purer breaſt from ſpot and blame
Thy guardian ſpirit came.

SONG.

I.

Nor on beds of fading flowers,
Shedding ſoon their gaudy pride;
Nor with ſwains in ſyren bowers,
Will true pleaſure long reſide.

II.

On awful virtue's hill ſublime,
Enthroned ſits th' immortal fair;
Who wins her height, muſt patient climb;
The ſteps are peril, toil and care.
So from the firſt did Jove ordain,
Eternal bliſs for tranſient pain.

[*Exit the* Spirit, *the muſic playing loud and ſolemn.*

*Lady.* Thanks, heav'nly ſongſter! whoſoe'er thou art,
Who deign'ſt to enter theſe unhallow'd walls,
To bring the ſong of Virtue to mine ear!
O ceaſe not, ceaſe not the melodious ſtrain,
Till my rapt ſoul high on the ſwelling note
To heav'n aſcend——far from theſe horrid fiends!

*Comus.* Mere airy dreams of air-bred people theſe;
Who look with envy on more happy man!
Drink this, and you will ſcorn ſuch idle tales.

[*He offers the cup, which ſhe puts by and attempts to riſe.*

Nay, lady, ſit; if I but wave this wand,
Your nerves are all bound up in alabaſter,
And you a ſtatue: 'or, as Daphne was,
'Root-bound, that fled Apollo.'

*Lady.* Fool, do not boaſt;
Thou can'ſt not touch the freedom of my mind
With all thy charms, altho' this corp'ral rind
Thou haſt immanacl'd while heav'n ſees good.

*Comus.* Why are you vex'd, lady? why do you frown?
Here dwell no frowns nor anger; from theſe gates
Sorrow flies far. See, here be all the pleaſures
That fancy can beget no youthful thoughts;

And firſt behold this cordial julep here,
That flames and dances in his cryſtal bounds.
*Lady.* Know, baſe deluder, that I will not taſte it.
Keep thy deteſted gifts for ſuch as theſe.
[*Points to his crew.*

SONG. *By a Man.*

Mortals, learn your lives to meaſure,
Not by length of time, but pleaſure;
Soon your ſpring muſt have a fall;
Loſing youth, is loſing all;
Then you'll aſk, but none will give,
And may linger, but not live.

*Comus.* Why ſhou'd you be ſo cruel to yourſelf,
And to thoſe dainty limbs, which Nature lent
For gentle uſage and ſoft delicacy;
That have been tir'd all day without repaſt,
And timely reſt have wanted? But, fair virgin,
This will reſtore all ſoon.
*Lady.* 'Twill not, falſe traitor!
'Twill not reſtore the truth and honeſty
That thou haſt baniſh'd from thy tongue with lies.
Was this the cottage, and the ſafe abode
Thou told'ſt me of? Hence with thy brew'd enchantments.
Were it a draught for Juno when ſhe banquets,
I wou'd not taſte thy treas'nous offer—None,
But ſuch as are good men, can give good things;
And that which is not good, is not delicious
To a well-govern'd and wiſe appetite.
Shall I go on?
Or have I ſaid enough?
*Comus.* Enough to ſhew
That you are cheated by the lying boaſts
Of ſtarving pedants, that affect a fame
From ſcorning pleaſures which they cannot reach.

Comus *ſings.*

I.

Preach not to me your muſty rules,
Ye drones that mould in idle cell;
The heart is wiſer than the ſchools,
The ſenſes always reaſon well.

II.

If ſhort my ſpan, I leſs can ſpare
To paſs a ſingle pleaſure by;
An hour is long, if loſt in care;
They only live, who life enjoy.

*Comus.* Liſt, lady, be not coy, and be not cozen'd
With that fame vaunted name Virginity.
What need a vermeil tinctur'd lip for that,
Love-darting eyes, or treſſes like the morn?

There was another meaning in theſe gifts;
Think what, and be adviſ'd: you are but young yet;
This will inform you ſoon.

[*The Brothers ruſh in with ſwords drawn, wreſt the glaſs out of his hand, and break it againſt the ground; his rout make ſigns of reſiſtance, but are all driven in.*

*Enter the firſt* Spirit.

What, have you let the falſe enchanter ſcape?
O, ye miſtook! you ſhould have ſnatch'd his wand
And bound him faſt; without his rod revers'd,
And backward mutters of deſev'ring pow'r,
We cannot free the lady, that ſits here
In ſtony fetters fix'd, and motionleſs.——
Yet ſtay, be not diſturb'd; now I bethink me,
There is a gentle nymph not far from hence,
Sabrina is her name, a virgin pure,
That ſways the Severn ſtream;
And, as the old ſwain ſaid, ſhe can unlock
The claſping charm, and thaw the numbing ſpell,
If ſhe be right invok'd in warbled ſong.

*Enter the ſecond* Spirit.

Haſte, Lycidas, and try the tuneful ſtrain,
Which from her bed the fair Sabrina calls.

SONG. *By a ſecond Spirit.*

Sabrina fair,
Liſten where thou art ſitting
Under the graſſy, cool, tranſlucent wave,
In twiſted braids of lilies knitting
The looſe train of thy amber-dropping hair:
Liſten, for dear honour's ſake,
Goddeſs of the ſilver lake;
Liſten and ſave.

Sabrina *riſes and ſings.*

By the ruſhy-fringed bank,
Where grows the willow and the oſier dank,
My ſliding chariot ſtays,
Thick ſet with agate, and the azure ſheen
Of turkis blue, and em'rald green,
That in the channel ſtrays;
Gentle ſwain, at thy requeſt,
I am here.

RECITATIVE.

*Second Spirit.* Goddeſs dear,
We implore thy powerful hand
To undo the charmed band
Of true virgin here diſtreſs'd,
Thro' the force, and thro' the wile,
Of unbleſs'd enchanter vile.

RECITATIVE.

*Sabrina.* Shepherd, 'tis my office beſt
To help enſnared chaſtity:
Brighteſt lady, look on me;
Thus I ſprinkle on thy breaſt
Drops, that from my fountain pure
I have kept, of precious cure;
Thrice upon thy finger's tip,
Thrice upon thy ruby'd lip;
Next this marble venom'd ſeat,
Smear'd with gums of glutinous heat,
I touch with chaſte palms moiſt and cold:
Now the ſpell hath loſt his hold;
And I muſt haſte, ere morning-hour,
To wait in Amphitrite's bower.

[Sabrina *deſcends, and the Lady riſes out of her ſeat; the Brothers embrace her tenderly.*

*Y. Bro.* Why did I doubt? Why tempt the wrath of heav'n
To ſhed juſt vengeance on my weak diſtruſt?
'Here ſpotleſs innocence has found relief,
'By means as wond'rous as her ſtrange diſtreſs.'

*E. Bro.* The freedom of the mind, you ſee, no charm,
No ſpell can reach; that righteous Jove forbids,
Leſt man ſhould call his frail divinity
The ſlave of evil, or the ſport of chance.
Inform us, Thyrſis, if for this thine aid,
We aught can pay that equals thy deſert.

*Firſt* Spirit *diſcovering himſelf.*

Pay it to heav'n! There my manſion is:
That lent you grace to eſcape this curſed place;
To heav'n, that here has try'd your youth,
Your faith, your patience, and your truth,
And ſent you thro' theſe hard eſſays
With a crown of deathleſs praiſe.

[*Then the two firſt* Spirits *advance, and ſpeak alternately the following lines, which* Milton *calls epiloguizing.*

To the ocean now I fly,
And thoſe happy climes that lie
Where day never ſhuts his eye
Up in the broad fields of the ſky:
There I ſuck the liquid air,
All amidſt the gardens fair
Of Heſperus, and his daughters three,
That ſings about the golden tree.
Along the criſped ſhades and bowers
Revels the ſpruce and jocund ſpring;
The graces and the roſy-boſom'd hours

Thither all their bounties bring;
There eternal ſummer dwells,
And weſt-winds with muſky wing
About the cedarn alleys fling
Nard and Caſſia's balmy ſmells.
Now my taſk is ſmoothly done,
I can fly or I can run,
Quickly to the green earth's end,
Where the bow'd welkin ſlow doth bend;
And from thence can ſoar as ſoon
To the corners of the moon.
Mortals that would follow me,
Love virtue, ſhe alone is free:
She can teach you how to climb
Higher than the ſphery chime;
Or, if virtue feeble were,
Heaven itſelf would ſtoop to her.

*Chorus.* Taught by virtue, you may climb
Higher than the ſphery chime;
Or, if virtue feeble were,
Heaven itſelf would ſtoop to her.